2: Durham B-5 (ca. 1910)1928 EG1 Albania EG1

of the shortage of women. This, I believe, is largely caused by the high rate of mortality in childbirth and the extremely hard lives of the women.

A girl, once betrothed, is the property of the family which has bought her, and must be *intacta virgo* when handed over. The most important object of marriage is to obtain sons. A sonless man had no one to avenge him, and his soul would never rest. Therefore in old days, when a girl was handed over, it was usual that the couple should cohabit, but no marriage ceremony should take place till a son was born. The Church has actively fought this custom and almost abolished it. But some cases still occur. Even when the unfortunate woman bore several daughters she might still be treated as worthless; and a married woman who has borne only daughters and is left as a widow has not the right to stay in the family house, but may be permitted to do so. If this is not allowed, her own nearest male relative has the right to sell her again—cheap. I heard of a nephew who had sold his aunt twice.

In a report on the missionary work in Albania made by the Franciscan father Donato Maria di Trento in 1740, he states that the priests are doing all they can to prevent parents from allowing the betrothed to cohabit before marriage, which custom, he says, is universal, and describes as "a most foul torrent of universal concubinage." "They will not contract marriage till offspring is obtained."

Girls being thus married without any choice of their own, and being miserable in strange surroundings, were naturally apt to run away. In the above report this is constantly mentioned as cause of great trouble and feud. Thus Padre Candido reports from Gruda January 31, 1740: "Women are running away every day, even after marriage." And P. Bonaventura says: "The women are running away *a grandissima furia*."

The custom of child betrothal and payment of parents is described and signed by thirteen padres and the Bishop of Scutari in 1731, and it is stated that it is great disgrace for the betrothed to see each other before they cohabit, or for the bride even to speak with the relatives of the bridegroom. The two parties are never consulted, and "in this country the youth never make love."

To counteract these difficulties the Mission makes much use of the local custom of swearing a common oath in which those swearing it call down all kinds of imprecations on their heads should they be forsworn. Consequent upon the swearing of many such oaths the Mission reports sixty-four marriages celebrated either before or immediately after cohabitation. P. Bonaventura triumphantly states that thirteen married by him are still with their husbands; but of those

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

escaped from the district, his master might lawfully be shot in his stead. When, however, a servant murdered on his own responsibility, he alone should suffer for the crime. His master was entitled, in dismissing him, to keep back the portion of his wages for which he had not worked, and according to Lek's Kanùn ought not to be shot in his stead. Skanderbeg's law, however, held him as liable in this case as in the former.

The only available information about a servant's seducing a girl or young wife in his master's family comes from Martanesh and Shkrel and dates from past times. In Martanesh the law condemned the man to death for incest because his master was his 'father' and the young woman his 'sister'. In Shkrel he was killed at once if he had sinned with a young wife, but if with a girl he was dismissed with orders to hold his tongue, and only if he talked did the girl's father go and shoot him. As for the girl, she was married to her fiancé as quickly as possible. He was not told that she was pregnant by another man, and would not have cared if he had been. He wanted her as wife and worker and felt sure that he was man enough to keep her straight after marriage; beatings always worked wonders. The child was sent to the servant as soon as born; he never acknowledged it but either killed it or exposed it by the wayside. The father did not dare to beat the girl in case she ran away to the servant; at all costs he had to keep her for her fiancé, who had presumably paid a good proportion of her bride-price and would have killed him had he failed to deliver her. Presumably the fact that a servant was held to be of little or no account saved the wife or girl from the usual punishment for adultery.[1]

Sometimes, despite their being 'brother' and 'sister', a servant married his master's daughter. Thus an ancestor of Bicaj was a Catholic of Gjugjë in Mirditë who entered the service of Hysen Agë Shteki of Bicaj, turned Moslem, and married Hysen Agë's daughter. Even in modern times a servant may be given his master's daughter in marriage. This is particularly likely to happen if his master is Moslem and he a Christian who agrees to change his religion. His master then looks on his own consent to the marriage as an act of piety. Servants varied in importance according to the master they served. Thus the servant of a Moslem priest (*hoxhë*) had more power than an ordinary peasant's and less than a bajraktar's —at least in the days before most bajraktars were shorn of their

[1] See Chapter XXI.

10: Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

couple were buried in any sort of hole, but in separate graves without a hoxha or being washed on boards and changed. In Lumë other customs prevailed. Both were buried in the cemetery in the ordinary way, unless they had been caught outside in some wood or thicket, in which case they were buried where they were killed. [766] 684 627

Public opinion is growing against such double murders. It was too often the custom to give young girls to old men, with the inevitable result that the young wives were apt to fall in love with men more of their own age and had therefore to be killed by their fathers. [582]

At Zdrâjshë, when a bride was found on marriage to be pregnant by another man, the unusually mild divorced her at once, but the general rule was to have her killed. The groom locked up the bride, sent for her father, and bade him find her lover. The father always asked for three or four days' respite during which he made inquiries. If the bride had indeed done wrong, an honest father sought out and killed the lover and then came to shoot his own daughter. Or perhaps he gave the bridegroom a cartridge and bade him shoot her with it. All the principles involved are well illustrated by a story from Lurë, still the most undisciplined of all Albanian tribes. About 1928 Metë Hoti, having taken a bride from Vehib Runa in Gur, found her within three months of bearing a child by another man. He sent her back to her father, bidding him find the lover and kill them both. The father would not kill his daughter and persisted in his refusal in spite of Metë's threats to kill the whole family if he did not do so. The father's kinsmen supported Metë, and when he came one night and killed the father, mother, daughter and infant and four other people in the house, they refused to avenge these deaths because the father had transgressed against the unwritten law. For the same reason the government merely imprisoned Metë for a few months. 836 625 606 684 593 [184] [672]

A woman might be killed for various reasons by a man in her husband's or her father's family. For example, her husband or his representative had leave to kill her for heinous crimes like adultery, incorrigible pilfering, or murdering one of his relatives, but if they killed her for any other reason, her father killed one of them. Two principles were involved: one, that a man bought only the services of his wife and not her life; the other, that a woman retained till her dying day her right to protection by her father's family. Her son by the murderer could not avenge her, because killing his 682 562 596 623 [593]